



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

LETTER

TO

HON. WILLIAM NELSON, M. C.,

ON

MR. WEBSTER'S SPEECH,

FROM

WILLIAM JAY.



New-York :

WILLIAM HARNED, 61 JOHN STREET.

Price 2 cts. single; 18¾ cts. a dozen; \$1 00 a hundred.

—
1850,

LETTER.

NEW YORK, 16th March, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR:—Availing myself of your kind invitation to give you my sentiments at any time, on topics occupying the attention of Congress, I wrote to you a few weeks ago, in relation to the compromise proposed by Mr. Clay. Since the date of that letter, you, and I, and indeed the whole nation, have been astounded by the strange course pursued in the Senate by Mr. Webster. I inquire not into his motives; to his own master he standeth or falleth: but certainly it must be admitted by friends and foes, that his recent somerset is one of the boldest and most extraordinary ever thrown by a political tumbler. I will not inflict upon you a minute examination of his lamentable speech, but I will take the liberty to call your attention to a few of its prominent points.

Gen. Cass frankly confessed that, with regard to the Wilmot proviso, “a change had come over him”; but Mr. Webster, while his personal identity is almost wholly destroyed, while scarcely a fragment of the former man remains, is under the hallucination that he is the same Daniel Webster as before, and while denouncing and ridiculing the proviso, professes to be as much devoted to its principle as ever!

He *now* pours contempt, not only upon legislative instructions, but also upon legislative expressions of hostility to

the extension of slavery. "I should be unwilling to receive from the Legislature of Massachusetts any instructions to *present resolutions expressive of any opinions whatever, on the subject of slavery*, for two reasons: first, I do not consider that the Legislature of Massachusetts has anything to do with it; and next, I do not consider that I, as her representative, have anything to do with it."

On the 1st of March, 1847, he read in the Senate certain strong anti-slavery resolutions of the Massachusetts Legislature, and announced that they had been passed *unanimously*. Did he then rebuke the Legislature of his State, for meddling with what was none of their business? Hear him: "I THANK her (Massachusetts) for it, and am PROUD of her, for she has denounced the whole object for which our armies are now traversing the mountains of Mexico. If anything is certain, it is that the sentiment of the whole North is utterly opposed to the acquisition of territory to be formed into *new slaveholding States*."—*Cong. Globe*, p. 555.

In 1819, Mr. Webster, as one of the committee, submitted to a Boston meeting two resolutions, viz.: "That the Congress of the United States possess the constitutional power, upon the admission of any new State created beyond the limits of the original territory of the United States, to make the prohibition of the further extension of slavery or involuntary servitude in such new State a condition of its admission;" and that "It is just and expedient that this power *should be exercised by Congress* upon the admission of ALL new States erected beyond the original limits of the United States." Now Mr. Webster, as the representative of Massachusetts in Congress, does not consider that *he* has anything to do with the subject of slavery!

When it was ascertained, during the war, that new territory would be acquired, and when it was openly avowed that it was to become slave territory, the House of Representatives passed Mr. Wilmot's proviso, expressly excluding slavery from the territory to be thus acquired. This, as we all know, led to a violent political agitation. What part did Mr. Webster take in this agitation? In 1847, he ad-

dressed a meeting of his own party, and declared, "There is not a man in this hall WHO HOLDS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF THE WILMOT PROVISIO MORE FIRMLY THAN I DO." The principle of the proviso was the exclusion of slavery, by act of Congress, from *the territory to be acquired from Mexico*; and that territory, we all know, was none other than New-Mexico and California.

The agitation waxed fiercer and fiercer. The Whig party at the North pledged themselves to the proviso; the Legislature of Massachusetts, as we have seen, *unanimously* declared for the exclusion of slavery from New-Mexico and California, and Mr. Webster publicly thanked his State, and was proud of her for so doing. The Whig party in Massachusetts nominated Mr. Webster for the Presidency, and he stood before the country as the *Wilmot proviso candidate*. General Taylor was ultimately selected as the Whig candidate, and was supported by the Northern Whigs, on the pledges made by his friends, that he would not veto the proviso. General Cass, on the other hand, was the avowed anti-proviso candidate, and as such, was opposed by the whole Whig party at the North. The great issue on which the election turned in the free States, was the prohibition or permission, by Congress, of slavery in New-Mexico and California. After the candidates were nominated, and while the whole country was convulsed with this issue, what was the course of Mr. Webster? Did he dissent from his Northern friends? Did he tell them the issue they had made was a nonsensical one? Hear him once more. On the 10th of August, 1848, *after* New-Mexico and California were acquired, he rose in the Senate and thus delivered himself: "My opposition to the increase of slavery in this country, or to the increase of slave representation, is general and universal. It has no reference to the lines of *latitude* or points of the compass. I SHALL OPPOSE ALL SUCH EXTENSION AT ALL TIMES AND UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, EVEN AGAINST ALL INDUCEMENTS, AGAINST ALL SUPPOSED LIMITATION OF GREAT INTERESTS, AGAINST ALL COMBINATIONS, AGAINST ALL COMPROMISES."

To what, let me ask, did this solemn, emphatic, unqualified asseveration refer? Did he then know that there was

not a foot of territory in the United States, over which it was not morally and physically impossible to extend slavery? Was he promising, in these impressive terms, to oppose what he was conscious would never be attempted? Did he make this pledge before his country, with a mental reservation to unite hereafter with General Cass and the slaveholders, in denouncing and scorning the proviso? Did he mean to deceive his own party? Did he desire to keep up an angry agitation, throughout the nation, for electioneering purposes, and did he thus intimate his belief in the danger of the extension of slavery and slave representation, when he well knew that the fiat of the Almighty had rendered such extension impossible? Was he then acquainted with the "law of physical geography," which would render the proviso "a re-enactment of the will of God?" And did he purposely conceal the secret of this law in his own breast, when, by revealing it, he might have stilled the raging billows of popular passion which threatened to engulf the Union? To suppose all this, would be to impute to Mr. Webster a degree of trickery and turpitude rarely paralleled even among politicians. Hence we are bound to assume that the law of nature, on which he *now* relies, is a recent discovery, subsequent at least to the 10th August, 1848

It is, however, extraordinary, that a gentleman of his acquirements did not sooner become acquainted with this "LAW OF PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY—THE LAW OF THE FORMATION OF THE EARTH, THAT SETTLES FOR EVER, BEYOND ALL TERMS OF HUMAN ENACTMENT, THAT SLAVERY CANNOT EXIST IN CALIFORNIA OR NEW-MEXICO." It is to be regretted that Mr. Webster did not condescend to demonstrate the existence of this law, and to explain the mode of its operation. He, indeed, tells us that our new territories are "Asiatic in their formation and scenery;" but this fact does not prove his law, since slavery has existed for ages amid the scenery of Asia; it exists in the deserts of Africa, has existed in every country of Europe, and now exists in the frozen regions of Russia. This law, moreover, must have been enacted by the Creator since 1824, or its operation must have been previously suspended in deference to the Spanish gov-

ernment; for under that government, negro slavery did exist in New-Mexico and California, and it ceased in 1824, not by the law of "physical geography," but by a Mexican edict. Thousands of slaves are employed in the mines of Brazil, and Mr. Webster does not explain how his law forbids their employment in the mines of California. Mr. Webster ridicules the application of the proviso to Canada, in case of annexation. I neither see nor feel the point of his wit—slavery is already prohibited by the local law of Canada, but were it not, most certainly it ought to be prohibited as a condition of annexation. New-York adjoins Canada, and Mr. Webster probably regards the prohibition of slavery in our recent Constitution as the height of absurdity. In 1790 there were 21,000 slaves in New-York, and on the 4th of July, 1827, about 10,000 slaves were emancipated, not by Mr. Webster's law, but by act of the Legislature, and the number would have been much greater, had not laws for their gradual emancipation been in operation since 1796. For a long period, slavery flourished in New-York undisturbed by abolitionists. The absence of all anti-slavery agitation was as perfect as Mr. Webster's heart could desire. Stray negroes were caught with almost as much ease as stray pigs. Neither pulpit nor press ruffled the happy serenity of the slaveholders. But this blissful repose was suddenly broken in 1741, by rumors of an *intended* insurrection. Courts and executioners were immediately put into requisition, and in pursuance of judicial sentences, *thirteen slaves were burnt alive at the stake in the city of New-York*, eighteen were hanged, and seventy-one were exported to foreign markets. Mr. Webster is unnecessarily distressed by the supposed unhappy influence of the anti-slavery agitation upon the condition of the slaves. They were never better treated, were never less miserable than at the present moment. The more public observation is directed to the conduct of the masters, the less reprehensible will that conduct be.

The promulgation of the law of "physical geography" seems to make no impression on the slaveholders, as they continue as ravenous as ever for the new territories. But with one accord they unite with the pro-slavery Democrats

at the North, and with our Northern politicians and merchants eager for Southern votes and Southern trade, in lauding and glorifying him, not for his discovery of a new law of nature, but for his discovery of a NATIONAL PLEDGE to receive into the Union THREE SLAVE STATES to be formed out of the Texan territory—for his denunciation of the proviso, and for his promised aid in catching the future Latimers who may be found on the soil of MASSACHUSETTS.

Congress by the Constitution may admit new States at discretion, and hence new States have been admitted on various conditions. The joint resolutions admitting Texas imposed *restrictions* on this power. Congress *may*, with the consent of Texas, admit *one* State north of $36^{\circ} 30'$, but if admitted, it *must* be as a free State. Congress *may* admit *three* States, with the consent of Texas, south of that line; but if admitted, no restriction in regard to slavery can be imposed on them. Mr. Webster now finds in these resolutions what had escaped the knowledge of both the North and the South, viz., a NATIONAL PLEDGE to admit THREE SLAVE STATES. As no State can be admitted without the consent of Texas, and as that consent will be withheld for a State north of $36^{\circ} 30'$, it follows, according to Mr. Webster, that we have made a one-sided bargain; of the four contemplated States, we *must* have three with slavery, but are to be cheated out of the one with freedom. This discovery, which has taken the whole nation by surprise, is, like the discovery of the geographical law, of recent date.

On the 22d March, 1848, Mr. Webster was ignorant of this national pledge! In his speech in the Senate, on that day, alluding to the joint resolutions, he remarked:—

“If you refer to the resolutions providing for the annexation of Texas, you find a proviso that it shall be in the POWER OF CONGRESS hereafter to make four new States out of the Texan territory—present and prospective five new States; ten new Senators MAY come into the Union out of Texas.”—*Houston's Reports*, p. 403.

Mr. Webster pledges himself to vote for the bill now pending in the Senate, for the recovery of fugitive slaves, by which a citizen of Massachusetts may be converted into